

# STATE OF COLORADO

**OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR JANE E. NORTON**

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The Lieutenant Governor's Committee to Promote Adoption

Bill Owens  
Governor

## NOTES

### COMMITTEE MEETING

#### **THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE TO PROMOTE ADOPTION**

**JANUARY 9, 2004**

**MEETING HELD AT THE  
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 356**

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Lieutenant Governor Jane Norton called the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 p.m. and welcomed members of the committee. Special thanks were extended to Sandy Blaylock, Chief of Staff for the Lieutenant Governor's Office, for her the hard work, preparation and for serving as lead on the adoption initiative. Lieutenant Governor Norton then reiterated the goal of the committee – to achieve permanency placement for every waiting child in the State of Colorado.

#### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

The committee members present included: Terry Baggy, Co-chair; The Honorable David Long, Weld County Commissioner - District 1; The Honorable John Suthers, United States Attorney for the District of Colorado; Marva Hammons, Executive Director of the Department of Human Services; The Honorable Ted Harvey, Colorado State Representative for District 43; Brenda Chinn (via conference call); Elaine Torres, Manager of Community Affairs for NEWS4-CBS TV; Maren Stewart, Vice President of External Affairs for Children's Hospital; The Honorable David Furman, J.D., Denver District Court Magistrate; The Honorable Brian Boatright, Jefferson County District Court Judge; Alice Spencer, Family Resource Coordinator for Access Behavioral Care; Marilyn Neihart, Director of Fort Morgan County Social Services; Virginia Appeal, Executive Director of the Adoption Alliance; Frank Bennett, Ph.D., Director of Family Services for the Aurora Mental Health Center; Dixie van der Flier Davis, Executive Director of the Adoption Exchange; and Gwen White, Foster Care Program Director for Lutheran Family Services of Colorado.

Ex-officio members present included: Sandy Blaylock, Chief of Staff and Adoption Lead for the Office of the Lieutenant Governor; Barbara Prehmus, External Legislative Affairs Director for the Department of Health Care, Policy & Finance; and Stephen Heiling, Deputy Director for the Office of Child and Family Services. Staff members present included: Angela Thompson, Office of the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Colorado; and Mercelle Seale-Pierce, Mercelle Seale-Pierce, Senior Associate of Communications for the Daniels Fund.

Audience Members/Guests present included: Deborah Cave, President of the Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Families; Sherry Shink, Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center; Harry Spetnagel, The Adoption Exchange; Cheryl Jacobson, Foster Care Adoption Recruitment and Retention Program Specialists, Colorado Department of Human Services; Sharen Ford, Manager for Permanency Services, Colorado Department of Human Services; Vickie Broerman, Office of Senator Wayne Allard; Paula Bagby, adoptive parent and member of the Task Force to Promote Adoption; and Dustin and Johnny Bagby, adopted sons of Terry and Paula Bagby.

### **III. TRANSITION OF TASK FORCE TO COMMITTEE**

Following the introductions, Lieutenant Governor Norton acknowledged the Task Force and its grass roots efforts to develop the committee. She reviewed correspondence sent to the committee member prior to the meeting that discussed need, the role of the Lieutenant Governor's office in this initiative, and some adoption facts. An additional copy of the correspondence is included in the committee notebooks.

### **IV. CHARGE #1 – OVERVIEW OF RULES AND REGULATIONS & PROCESS FLOW**

Sharen Ford, Manager for Permanency Services for Colorado's Department of Human Services, presented a Power Point presentation that outlined the generic adoption process for the State of Colorado. Information for the presentation was derived from *The Child Welfare Policy and Procedures Manual*, of which portions were given to committee members in a previously mailed packet. The Power Point Presentation included the following information:

- First contact process
- Initial orientation (which varies throughout counties) and includes fee information, learning about waiting children, training courses, expedited permanency planning, state special requirements, recruitment efforts, etc.
- Application processes that include requirements required documentation, records and reports checks, private agency vs. county agency fees, etc.
- Pre-service Training
- Home study or Mutual Assessment- preparation of families for adoption. Dr. Ford noted that home studies are the property of individual agencies and ...

- Licensing or Approval Process
- Placement which is the finalization (varies from county to county), birth families and the appeals process,
- Subsidized adoption and county requirements
- Post-Finalization Process
- Adoptive Parental Support

## **V. CHARGE # 2 – OVERVIEW OF CENTRALIZED ASSISTANCE**

Committee co-chair, Terry Bagby reviewed Charge #2, which is to provide prospective adoptive families with statewide, centralized assistance regarding the adoption process, in both pre- and post-adoption.

Paula Bagby emphasized the importance of dispelling the myths surrounding adoption and the adoption process and a centralized database to help answer questions and help introduce prospective adoptive parents to the process anonymously. Although Mrs. Bagby noted that getting through the adoption process herself was a difficult, she believed her persistence paid off and became a “wonderful success.” However, Mrs. Bagby said others may fail because of the fear of not be qualified, the fear of the process, and the lack of knowledge about how many children are available. A centralized “user friendly” database could help lessen the burden many families believe they will face.

Mr. Bagby reiterated that in order to properly prepare and staff this centralized database businesses and community organizations must be called upon for support, along with private industry, seed money from foundations and collaborative efforts among adoption services. Compass Bank has already expressed an interest in helping to support this effort.

## **VI. CHARGE #3 – OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, EDUCATION AND PROMOTING ADOPTION STRATEGIES**

Deborah Cave, President of the Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Families, briefly addressed the goals of the *Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997(ASFA)*, noting that prior to ASFA there were thousands of waiting children in the nation. Ms. Cave noted that ASFA provided financial incentives to states that promoted adoption, which she believed, resulted in over 230,000 children being adopted in the first year following ASFA’s enactment. In 2003, Ms. Cave noted that the program was reauthorized with more significant financial incentives in November to further encourage states to help promote the adoption of older children (9 and older) and children with special needs (sibling groups, those with physical disabilities, etc). Ms. Cave explained that the older a child becomes the more significant his/her chances become of being involved in a failed adoption or disruption prior to finalization of the adoption process. Ms. Cave then asked the committee to focus on the need for post adoption services to help prevent disrupted adoptions and achieve true permanency.

Ms. Cave shared that her adopted son had been in over 15 placements prior to his placement and adoption with her family. She further reiterated the need for post adoption services including respite for adoptive families and services to help with special needs. Many adoptive families have little services available to them following an adoption to help with the number of social and emotional issues children face that may be caused by frequent moves, neglect, or abuse.

Dixie van der Flier Davis, Executive Director of the Adoption Exchange, reviewed various active collaborative recruitment efforts for Colorado's waiting children including AdoptUSKids 2004 advertising campaign; David's Dream, a faith based organization to promote the adoption of children of color; the Rural Adoption Cooperative project which establishes a collaborative effort between Colorado, Utah and South Dakota; and the Adoptive Family Resource Registry sponsored by DHS and the Adoption Exchange. Ms. van der Flier Davis also commented on the success of Colorado's Shout Out event held in November at the State Capitol, and CBS' nationally televised special *At Home for the Holidays*.

Cheryl Jacobson, Foster Care Adoption Recruitment and Retention Program Specialists for Colorado's Department of Human Services emphasized the importance of recruitment. Ms. Jacobson noted that the Annie E. Casey Foundation has deemed recruitment as everyone's job. Ms. Jacobson reviewed the *Success Factors Study* that explained who can be successful as an adoptive parent noting that success is often achieved with a well prepared family, a good adoptive match, and the recruitment of individuals with prior parenting experience.

## **VII. OVERVIEW OF NOTEBOOKS**

Lieutenant Governor Norton reviewed the committee's notebooks and contact information. No changes were made to contact information by committee members.

## **VIII. VIDEO VIEWING – A YOUNG CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW ON FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION**

The committee viewed *A Young Child's Point of View on Foster Care and Adoption*, a video produced by the Infant Parent Institute. The video was a display of words and children's voices regarding language barriers, foster parents, feelings and emotions, abandonment and attachment issues, constant movement, loss and grief, loss of siblings, desiring a family, yearning, inability to express pain and resentment, etc. Lieutenant Norton asked the committee for comments however no comments were offered for debriefing and or discussion. The Honorable David Furman noted that *A Young Child's Point of View on Foster Care and Adoption* will be shown to judges and magistrates across the state in the coming months.

## **IX. COMMITTEE PROCESS AND NEXT STEPS**

Lieutenant Governor Norton reviewed the proposed committee ground rules under Tab 7. Frank Suthers proposed one revision to item #5 – “Propose solutions and recommendations that are practical and possible.” Mr. Suthers requested that the committee be given the ability to talk about where the committee would like to be and the committee’s first steps, noting that it might not reach all goals immediately and reassessment may be required. The consensus of the committee was to add an addition to ground rule #5 that allows for “reassessment” and to adopt the remaining proposed ground rules as stated.

The following ground rules were adopted:

1. Focus on what is in the best interest of the children.
2. Attend all scheduled meetings – unless prior arrangements have been made with Committee staff to join via conference call.
3. Not designate substitutes, alternatives, or other staff to attend Committee meetings.
4. Think creatively, critically, and “out-of-the-box”!
5. Propose solutions and recommendations that are practical and possible.
6. Bring expertise and experience to the table.
7. Challenge our own personal biases.
8. Listen with respect to the diverse opinions and ideas that are presented and emerge during Committee deliberations.
9. Come to meetings prepared.
10. Not use Committee meetings as a forum for resolution of individual cases.
11. Allow at least 15 minutes at the conclusion of every Committee meeting for public comment.

Lieutenant Governor Norton then reviewed the subgroups assigned under Tab 6. Barbara Prehums will move to Charge #1 and Commissioner Long will move to Charge #1. Marilyn Neihart, Marva Livingston Hammons, and Dixie Davis were invited to serve as chairs of sub-groups 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

All committee chairs agreed to serve and the committee agreed upon the sub-group changes. Lieutenant Governor Norton and Sandy Blaylock will work with all sub-groups. The sub-groups and charges are as follows:

**Charge #1-** Review pertinent laws, regulations, judicial procedures, and other support systems that impact the state’s adoption system.

### **Sub-group #1**

Ms. Marilyn Neihart, Chair

The Honorable Brian Boatright

The Honorable David Furman

The Honorable David Long (from sub-group 2)

The Honorable Ted Harvey

Ms. Barbara Prehum, Ex-Officio (from sub-group 2)

Ms. Maren Stewart  
Mr. Chris Castilian, Ex-Officio

**Charge #2-** Provide prospective adoptive families with statewide, centralized assistance regarding the adoption process, both pre and post-adoption.

**Sub-group #2**

Ms. Marva Livingston Hammons, Chair  
Mr. Terry Bagby  
Dr. Frank Bennett  
Mr. Brian Field  
Ms. Alice Spence, Ex-Officio  
Ms. Mercelle Seale-Pierce, Staff

**Charge #3** – Develop a public relations and educational campaign to increase awareness of a child's need for permanency, to recruit permanency families, to dispel adoption 'untruths', and to promote adoption.

**Sub-group #3**

Dr. Dixie Davis, Chair  
Ms. Virginia Appel  
Ms. Brenda Chinn  
The Honorable John Suthers  
Ms. Elaine Torres  
Ms. Gwen White  
Mr. Stephen Heiling, Ex-officio

Following the review of ground rules and confirmation of subgroups, the committee finalized all future meeting dates as listed below:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting will be held Thursday, February 26, 2004 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting will be held Thursday, March 25, 2004 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- 4<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held Thursday, April 29, 2004 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 25, 2004 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. (The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting may be subject to change due to the Memorial Day Holiday)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting, if needed, will be held on Thursday, June 24, 2004 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Lieutenant Governor Norton noted that all findings would be summarized in recommendations to the administration and then to the legislative body. The Honorable Ted Harvey asked for additional statistics including age groups of waiting children, background information, what caused children to become adoptive children, what failures may exist in the system, etc., in order to make better assessments. Lieutenant Governor Norton reviewed the statistics on her letter entitled Strengthening Families: Promoting Adoption behind Tab 4 but said her office would provide more detailed statistics for the committee to review.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

The committee meeting adjourned at approximately 5:50 p.m., with sub-group members meeting briefly for planning.